

Informed Choices FOR Struggling Adolescent Readers

**A Research-Based Guide
to Instructional Programs
and Practices**

Donald D. Deshler
Annemarie Sullivan Palincsar
Gina Biancarosa
Marnie Nair

Commissioned by Carnegie Corporation of New York

© 2007 Carnegie Corporation of New York. All rights reserved.

Carnegie Corporation's Advancing Literacy program is dedicated to the issues of adolescent literacy and the research, policy, and practice that focus on the reading and writing competencies of middle and high school students. Advancing Literacy reports and other publications are designed to encourage local and national discussion, explore promising ideas, and incubate models of practice, but do not necessarily represent the recommendations of the corporation. For more information, visit www.carnegie.org/literacy.

Written by Donald D. Deshler, Annemarie Sullivan Palincsar, Gina Biancarosa, and Marnie Nair for Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Published by the International Reading Association.

The International Reading Association attempts, through its publications, to provide a forum for a wide spectrum of opinions on reading. This policy permits divergent viewpoints without implying the endorsement of the Association.

Executive Editor, Books Corinne M. Mooney
Developmental Editor Charlene M. Nichols
Developmental Editor Tori Mello Bachman
Developmental Editor Stacey Lynn Sharp
Editorial Production Manager Shannon T. Fortner
Production Manager Iona Muscella
Supervisor, Electronic Publishing Anette Schuetz

Cover Linda Steere

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission from the publisher.

The publisher would appreciate notification where errors occur so that they may be corrected in subsequent printings and/or editions.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Informed choices for struggling adolescent readers : a research-based guide to instructional programs and practices / Donald D. Deshler ... [et al.].

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-87207-465-1

1. Reading (Middle school)--United States. 2. Literacy--United States. 3. Literacy programs--United States--Directories. I. Deshler, Donald D.
LB1632.P75 2007
428.4071'2--dc22

2007009442

CONTENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHORS	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
INTRODUCTION	1

PART I

Principles for Improving Adolescent Literacy

CHAPTER 1	11
Adolescent Literacy: Myths and Realities	
CHAPTER 2	37
The Content of Adolescent Literacy Instruction	
CHAPTER 3	49
Characteristics and Supports of Adolescent Literacy Instruction	
CHAPTER 4	61
Costs of Implementing Adolescent Literacy Programs	
CHAPTER 5	92
School and District Change to Improve Adolescent Literacy	

PART II

Specific Instructional Programs

Criteria for Selecting Programs	113
Criteria for Evaluating Programs	115
Using the Information Provided in Part II	117
Adolescent Literacy Programs Matrix 1: Types of Students Served	122
Adolescent Literacy Programs Matrix 2: Included Features	124
Adolescent Literacy Programs Matrix 3: Evaluated Features	126
Adolescent Literacy Programs Matrix 4: Skills, Strategies, and Knowledge Taught	128

Program Summaries	130
Academy of READING	130
Accelerated Reader	132
Achieve3000	135
Achieving Maximum Potential Reading System	137
Advancement Via Individual Determination	138
AfterSchool KidzLit	140
America's Choice—Ramp-Up Literacy	142
Benchmark Word Detectives	145
Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction	147
Corrective Reading	149
Disciplinary Literacy	151
Failure Free Reading	153
First Steps/STEPS	156
Junior Great Books	157
Knowledge Box	160
LANGUAGE!	161
Learning Upgrade	163
Lexia Strategies for Older Students	164
Lindamood-Bell	165
LitART	168
My Reading Coach	169
Passport Reading Journeys	171
Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies	173
Phono-graphix	175
PLATO Learning	177
Project CRISS	178
Puente	181
Questioning the Author	183
READ 180	186
READ RIGHT	189
Reading Apprenticeship	191
Reading Is FAME (Girls and Boys Town)	193
Reading Power in the Content Areas	196
Reciprocal Teaching	197
REWARDS	199
Saxon Phonics Intervention	201
Scaffolded Reading Experience	202
Soar to Success	204
Spell Read P.A.T.	206
Strategic Instruction Model	208
Success for All	211
Talent Development High Schools	213
Thinking Reader	216
Transactional Strategies Instruction	218
Vocabulary Improvement Program	220
Voyager TimeWarp Plus	222
Wilson Reading System	224
WriteToLearn	225
APPENDIX	229
Emerging Adolescent Literacy Programs	
REFERENCES	231
AUTHOR INDEX	245
SUBJECT INDEX	251

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Donald D. Deshler, School of Education, University of Kansas

Don Deshler taught adolescents in secondary schools in rural Alaska. Currently, he is the director of the Center for Research on Learning and professor in the School of Education at the University of Kansas. His research and development work focuses on the design and validation of instructional strategies for use in academically diverse secondary classrooms. Don is a member of several advisory boards dealing with issues related to adolescent literacy, including the National Institute for Literacy, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Alliance for Excellent Education, and the National Governors Association.

Annemarie Sullivan Palincsar, School of Education, University of Michigan
Annemarie Sullivan Palincsar is the Jean and Charles Walgreen Jr. Chair of Reading and Literacy and a teacher educator in Educational Studies at the University of Michigan. Her research focuses on the design of learning environments that support self-regulation in learning activity, especially for students who experience difficulty learning in school. She studies how students use literacy in the context of guided inquiry science instruction, what types of text support students' inquiry, and the use of digital texts to support learning from graphics-rich informational text. Annemarie has served as a member of the National Academy's Research Council on the Prevention of Reading Difficulty in Young Children, the OERI/RAND Reading Study Group, and the National Research Council's Panel on Teacher Preparation. She is co-editor of the journal *Cognition and Instruction*.

Gina Biancarosa, School of Education, Stanford University

Gina Biancarosa is a postdoctoral fellow at the Stanford University School of Education's Institute for Research on Education Policy and Practice. She has taught struggling adolescent readers in school-sponsored after-school and summer programs. Her research focuses on understanding the heterogeneity of struggling adolescent readers and on the design of better measures for research and educational purposes.

Marnie Nair, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University

Marnie Nair received her doctoral degree in Language and Literacy at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Previously, she worked as a teacher and reading specialist in middle and high schools in Oakland, New York City, and Washington, DC, and as a secondary school principal in New Orleans. Her research focuses on improving the supports offered to struggling adolescent

readers in urban schools, with a current emphasis on vocabulary teaching and learning in the content area classroom.

With contributions from:

Doran Catlin

Teachers College
Columbia University

Alex Elson

Teachers College
Columbia University

Reed T. Deshler

AlignOrg Solutions, LLC

Henry M. Levin

Teachers College
Columbia University

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WE ARE DEEPLY APPRECIATIVE of the thoughtful feedback and input from many of our colleagues during the writing process. First, the inspiration for this book came from Andrés Henríquez, program officer in Carnegie Corporation of New York's Education Division. Through his visionary leadership, Andrés has guided the work of the corporation's Advancing Literacy program. He has had a profound impact on improving programs and influencing policies related to adolescent literacy in our country. Our work was also shaped by insightful suggestions from members of the Carnegie Corporation of New York's Advisory Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy. We would like to thank Catherine Snow, chairperson of the Advisory Council and advisor to two of the authors (Gina Biancarosa and Marnie Nair) during their doctoral studies; in both of these roles she provided ongoing support of and insight into this work. Finally, we appreciate the guidance and assistance of Daniel Mangan, director of publications for the International Reading Association.

This work was partly made possible by support from the Spencer Foundation's Research Training Grant Program at Harvard Graduate School of Education and primarily through support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

INTRODUCTION

*Gina Biancarosa, Marnie Nair, Donald D. Deshler,
& Annemarie Sullivan Palincsar*

AMONG MIDDLE AND SECONDARY school administrators and teachers, there has long been great concern about adolescent literacy, as well as frustration at the lack of attention, information, and resources being directed at this very real concern. We hope the discussion here will make it clear not only that this concern is well-placed but also that the struggles many adolescent readers face are serious. Many adolescents fail and/or drop out of school because of their inability to read in school. Others stay in school and even appear to meet current standards only to find that their literacy skills do not meet the demands placed on them when they enter college or the workforce. Addressing the needs of these struggling readers is by no means a simple task. The reading “profile” of a school and even of students within that school can differ dramatically based on the school’s context, which makes addressing the needs of struggling readers a complex task and highlights the need to individually tailor a reading program to meet the particular needs of each setting.

This book is our attempt to arm educators with information and resources for addressing adolescent literacy within their own contexts. We hope this book will speak to your concerns whether your role is that of teacher, specialist, principal, or district administrator. Wherever you serve your students, be it a rural, suburban, or urban locale, the *process* you must go through to enact effective change in adolescent literacy achievement is much the same. At the same time, because the students you serve are unique, the *program* you develop will be unique. This book attempts to provide you with insight into the process in order to enable you to choose wisely among the extremely wide array of instructional programs currently available.

Getting the Lay of the Land: The Condition of Adolescent Literacy

In any adolescent literacy effort, it pays to be mindful not only of your local context but also of the larger national picture. Too often educators work in isolation from one another, not knowing that their colleagues in very different places are facing similar challenges or that they may have discovered some very effective

means for dealing with those challenges. We begin by considering adolescent literacy achievement broadly and then consider the ramifications of poor literacy.

Poor literacy skills are all too common in America's schools, with students in schools in both urban and rural low-income neighborhoods most at risk of failing to learn to read well. While there has been increased attention given to reading instruction in the last few years, accompanied by a louder call for standards-based learning, testing, and funding, currently most of the attention and resources have been focused on the reading needs of learners through grade 3.

Meanwhile, the well-documented "reading slump" that occurs in U.S. schools after fourth grade persists (Chall & Jacobs, 2003; Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990). Since the gap between proficient and struggling readers increases over time (Stanovich, 1986), the end result—as nationally mandated assessment data continue to attest—is that at-risk high school students across the United States are failing on measures of reading at epidemic rates (Perie, Grigg, & Donahue, 2005).

Comparing the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading results for 4th-, 8th-, and 12th-grade levels with those from 1992 reveal that although the percentage of students scoring proficient has significantly improved among 4th graders, the percentage of 8th and 12th graders scoring proficient has remained stagnant (Donahue, Voelkl, Campbell, & Mazzeo, 1999; Perie, Grigg, et al., 2005; Perie, Moran, & Lutkus, 2005). Despite improvements in 4th-grade proficiency rates, 70% of students entering the 5th and 9th grades in 2005 are reading below grade level (Perie, Grigg, et al., 2005). In fact, both dropouts and high school graduates are demonstrating significantly worse reading skills than 10 years ago (Kutner, Greenberg, & Baer, 2006).

In the U.S. capital in 2005, only 11% of eighth-grade students were found to be proficient readers (Perie, Grigg, et al., 2005). In 2004, in approximately 20% of Orleans Parish, Louisiana, schools, not a single eighth-grade student passed the state English Language Arts exam in 2004, and in another 57% of these schools less than 10% of students passed the same exam (LEAP for the 21st Century, n.d.). In 2005, in California, only 20% of students were proficient readers by the eighth grade (Perie, Grigg, et al., 2005). While poor literacy skills are more acute in some locales than in others, across the United States it is youths living in poverty who are most at risk of failing to learn to read well, and these statistics reflect the performance of adolescents living in poverty across the country. Even so, poor literacy skills are found in every corner of U.S. society.

Today, graduation rates range from 89% in New Jersey to 53% in South Carolina (Greene & Winters, 2005), with a disproportionate number of the students who drop out being poor and of color (Orfield, 2004). In general, students entering ninth grade in the lowest 25% of achievement are 20 times more likely to drop out than their higher performing peers (Carnevale, 2001). It should not be surprising then that some 30% of students drop out (Greene & Winters, 2005).

Of those students who do graduate from high school, approximately 32% are not ready for college-level English composition courses (ACT, 2005) and approximately 40% lack the literacy skills employers seek (Achieve, 2005). Moreover, the data reveal geographic and racial disparities in preparedness for higher education (Greene & Winters, 2005). About 38% of students in the northeast region of the country (Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont) graduate prepared for college, but the northeast also shows the greatest disparity in preparedness between white students (44% prepared) and Hispanic students (12% prepared). Students in the central region of the country (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin) have the lowest average rate of preparedness (31%) and the largest disparity between white students (35%) and African American students (15%). However, on average, half as many Hispanic and African American students graduate from high school prepared for college. With both college professors and employers reporting nearly equal dissatisfaction with the literacy skills of high school graduates (Achieve, 2005), we have strong evidence that similar numbers of high school graduates are unprepared to meet the literacy demands of the workplace.

The Real-World Demands for Advanced Literacy

Even youth who have successfully navigated the U.S. K–12 education system clearly have no guarantee that they will be able to perform competitively in higher education or employment. Community colleges and even four-year institutions find themselves unable to keep up with the demand for remedial reading and writing courses, yet students who need these courses and are unable to complete them are less likely to complete a vocational program at a community college and even less likely to go on to graduate from a four-year program (Bettinger & Long, 2005).

This fact is even more alarming when you consider that between 1973 and 1998 alone, the percentage of workers who were high school dropouts fell by at least half, whereas the percentage of workers with some college or a college degree more than doubled—not only in skilled blue-collar, clerical, and related professions but also in less-skilled blue-collar, service, and related professions (Carnevale, 2001). Not surprisingly, as the demand for unskilled labor has decreased, unemployment has increased at the fastest pace for those with low educational attainment (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2000, Tables 2.4, 2.5, & 3.1).

The end result is that the 70% of high school students who manage to graduate from high school (Greene & Winters, 2005) often find themselves unprepared to compete for the more lucrative jobs that require not only

postsecondary education but an ongoing ability to read in order to keep abreast of new developments in a rapidly changing global economy (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Levy & Murnane, 2004; OECD, 2000).

More worrisome still, the abysmal performance of America's adolescents is not due to inflated or unreasonable standards. International comparisons have found that U.S. 11th-grade students rank close to the bottom and behind Philippine, Indonesian, and Brazilian students (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). Moreover, U.S. dropouts rank lower than dropouts in most industrialized nations, performing comparably only with Chile, Poland, Portugal, and Slovenia (OECD, 2000). In addition, the range between the highest and lowest literacy levels in America is much wider than in almost any other nation, whether or not education is taken into account (OECD, 2000).

Certainly, poor literacy skills have far-reaching consequences in the lives of individual students. A large percentage of young dropouts are unemployed. Many end up in prison. The relatively small proportion who do find work can expect to make significantly less than their counterparts who do graduate from high school (Barton, 2005; OECD, 2000; Orfield, 2004). In 2002, the national average income for those dropouts who did find employment was only US\$18,800 per year (Orfield, 2004).

Students who do graduate from high school but are not prepared to complete college are often screened out of employment on the basis of low literacy skills (Achieve, 2005), and those who do find employment will earn on average US\$20,000 a year less than their counterparts with a bachelor's degree (Day & Newburger, 2002). Considering that this disparity has grown yearly over the past 25 years and that an increasingly technology-driven workplace demands more literacy skills than ever before, the economic impact for failing to learn to read well only heightens the need to address this pressing issue.

How This Book Can Help

Much of what we report in the preceding sections will not be news to educators who work daily with adolescents. We want to encourage you that the tide seems to be turning: The larger educational community seems to be responding to the needs of the adolescent reader. This is evidenced by policymakers and educational researchers who are increasingly turning their attention to addressing the needs of the struggling adolescent reader. Our purpose in writing this book is twofold.

The first purpose in writing this book is to offer an overview of what the latest research in adolescent literacy has shown to work best. We believe this overview will provide critical background information, not only for those who are responsible for making literacy curriculum choices for students but also for

those who may be specialists in subjects other than reading and want to better understand both the reading process and their struggling students.

The second purpose is to offer information to educators about specific literacy programs. In response to heavy demand, the availability of resources, programs, and curriculum that can be implemented in the classroom is growing by the day. This is a mixed blessing to the extent that with this increase comes a great deal of variability in the type and quality of programs available.

As such, the book is divided into two parts. Part I takes you through the process, from understanding the nature of adolescent literacy to considering the costs of instructional changes, while Part II provides a directory of adolescent literacy curriculum and programming options. We hope that this information will generate new insights and enable educators to make informed choices when attempting to address adolescent literacy, and this book has been structured to maximize this likelihood.

Although challenges will naturally differ from school to school, district to district, and even state to state, we believe strongly that a common base of understanding about the nature of adolescent literacy and the variation in adolescents' struggles with literacy is required to effect positive and lasting change. These are the topics of Chapter 1. We also assert that good adolescent literacy instruction, and especially good intervention, attends not just to a checklist of elements but to the specific needs and challenges of the local context. Chapter 2 reviews the potential content of adolescent literacy instruction and Chapter 3 the characteristics and supports of effective adolescent literacy instruction. In addition, we try to provide you with a way to plan for the real costs of any program you choose and how decisions about implementation can affect those costs. Thus, Chapter 4 estimates the costs of three very different programs for several different implementations, both actual and ideal. Finally, effective change should be guided by an appreciation for how instructional change requires organizational change and how you can look for the signs of readiness in your school. Consequently, Chapter 5 delves into the distinct challenges of making change—especially as it relates to implementing a new literacy program—in middle and high schools.

Part II contains a directory of adolescent literacy programs. The directory listings are preceded by a brief review of the process by which we located and checked our information on the included programs. Although the directory has a large selection of programs, we make no claims that it is exhaustive. In fact, the somewhat baffling quantity of curricula and professional development programs and the great variation among them is in part what inspired this book. Moreover, the proliferation of new programs, especially those being designed through renewed research interest in adolescent literacy, inspired us to include an appendix listing programs that are currently emerging through research. Hence, we strongly urge you to resist the temptation to skip right to the directory, which includes comparative matrixes, descriptive information, and sources. Rather, please take the time to study the first part of the book because

of the information it provides to guide you in determining the specific needs of your students and how to meet them most effectively. It is in the inclusion of these chapters that this book differs from other excellent reviews of adolescent literacy programs (Florida Center for Reading Research, 2006; Shanahan, 2005). It is our hope that armed with the information found in the first five chapters, you will approach this overview as simply a starting point for digging deeper and finding a literacy solution that is uniquely suited to your situation—your school, your administration, your teachers, and most of all, your students.

Contextualizing the Facts

To aid you in the process of finding a literacy solution, we have woven examples of how the facts we present might work themselves out in practice in several real schools that we have come to know in our research and practice. We hope that our discussion of these very real cases as we work through the issues in the following chapters will help you to imagine how you might do the same. Although we will cite a number of actual examples, we will focus more closely on the three schools we introduce here. (All names of institutions and people have been changed to maintain anonymity, but as much information as possible on each school's context has been preserved in order to make the examples as useful to the reader as possible.)

Hampshire Middle School

Hampshire Middle School is a public, urban school in Boston, Massachusetts, that serves 560 students in grades 6 through 8. Over three-quarters qualify for free or reduced-cost lunches, which is not unusual in Boston. About a third of Hampshire students are identified as English-language learners (ELLs), but only 6% (or 35 students) are identified as limited English proficient (LEP). LEP students do not receive services for developing their English proficiency as there are no teachers of English as a second language in the school. Hampshire is unusual in that a third of its students are in special education, and many of these students are not integrated into regular education classrooms. The school was declared underperforming by the State Department of Education in 2004–2005 when state tests revealed that less than a quarter of students were performing at grade level on the state test, with half needing improvement and almost a third in danger of failing. Moreover, the results were worse for other subject areas such as math. In addition to its literacy woes, the school has a higher than average out-of-school suspension rate (18 versus the city's average of 8) and absentee rate (19 days versus the city's average of 13).

Hope Academy

Hope Academy was a private, urban middle and high school for boys in New Orleans, Louisiana. Sad to say, it was destroyed in Hurricane Katrina. While in

operation, Hope Academy served approximately 140 boys in grades 7 through 10. One hundred percent of the students were African American, native English speakers; all but two students qualified for free or reduced-cost lunch. Although the school was a private school, students paid only a small amount of tuition (on average US\$20 per month) with the rest of the funding provided by scholarships. This being a new school, teachers were flexible and ready for change, although the level of teacher preparation was varied. While the school's status as a private school meant that teachers had three years after hiring to meet certification requirements, the lack of certified teachers was very reflective of schools in the area. Although only a small number of the students were identified as special education students, the teachers readily acknowledged their students' reading difficulties and that many students at each grade level were unable to decode even single-syllable words.

Bernadine High School

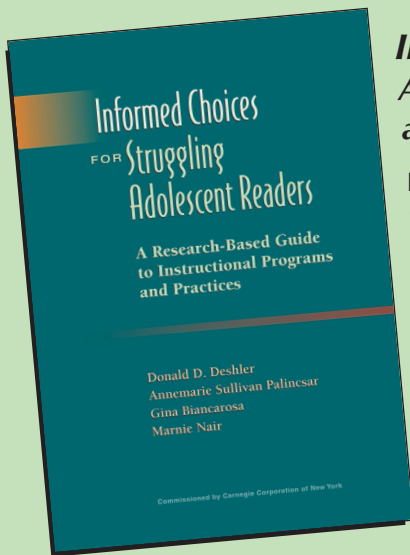
Bernadine High School (BHS) is a public, rural high school in the Midwest. BHS serves approximately 1,200 students, about 60% of whom are Caucasian, about 30% Hispanic, and 8% African American. Almost half of the students qualify for free and reduced-cost lunches, and an increasing number of ELLs have been enrolling at BHS. Most of these ELLs come from migrant-worker families. In the 1970s and 1980s the school had one of the best academic records of comparable schools in the state. But with its shifting demographics, academic performance began to fall rapidly in the early 1990s, which led to a 10-year string of failed short-term reform efforts that did little to reverse the school's decline. Recent assessments have revealed that half of the school's 390 ninth-graders read below grade level, with one-third of them performing two or more years below grade level. With a staff weary of the turnstile of reform, BHS faces an uphill battle to regain its former glory as a place where adolescents learn, read, and write proficiently.

Some Final Food for Thought

Clearly, these three schools have very different student bodies and very different contexts. Despite their apparent differences, the same issues that are covered in the following chapters apply to them all. What are their students' different needs and strengths? Are the schools in similar stages of readiness for change? What changes in content, characteristics, and supports of literacy instruction will best suit their students? And what will those changes cost them?

New
from
IRA!

The definitive guide to adolescent literacy programs



Informed Choices for Struggling Adolescent Readers: A Research-Based Guide to Instructional Programs and Practices

Donald D. Deshler, Annemarie Sullivan Palincsar,
Gina Biancarosa, Marnie Nair

This comprehensive resource delivers the insights you need to choose wisely among the many instructional programs currently available for adolescents.

- Part I offers an overview of what the latest research in adolescent literacy has shown to work best. You'll find out how to target effective instruction to meet your students' needs, how to budget for specific programs, how implementation may influence total budget costs, and how leadership and organization contribute to real change in adolescent reading instruction.
- Part II provides an extensive directory of adolescent literacy curriculum and programming options. Each entry includes a program description, summary of research, and professional development options to help you find a literacy solution that fits your school.

A bibliographical reference section and an appendix of websites for new and developing adolescent literacy programs are included.

Commissioned by Carnegie Corporation of New York

© 2007 Carnegie Corporation of New York / ISBN-13: 978-0-87207-465-1
No. 465-000 / **IRA Members \$23.16** • Nonmembers \$28.95

**For more
Adolescent Literacy
Resources
from IRA,
go to
www.reading.org**

View contents listing and a sample chapter at www.reading.org.

Join IRA today and pay the member book price—a 20% savings!

Order today!

Online at www.reading.org
Call toll free 800-336-7323
(Outside the U.S. and
Canada, call 302-731-1600)

Guarantee: We unconditionally guarantee your purchase. If you are not satisfied with your order, return it to us within 30 days for a full refund or credit.

**INTERNATIONAL
Reading Association**
800 BARKSDALE ROAD, PO BOX 8139
NEWARK, DE 19714-8139, USA
www.reading.org